KKK plans 'James Earl Ray' rally at Rocky Ridge farm

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Ku Klux Klan members have scheduled a "James Earl Ray" rally for Saturday, April 4, on the private Rocky Ridge farm that has been the site of several Klan gatherings.

It was on that date in 1968 when Ray assassinated civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at a Memphis, Tenn., motel.

"There will be a cross-lighting ceremony at 7 p.m.," Grand Dragon Roger Kelly said in a phone call placed to the *News-Post* Wednesday evening. "Klansmen and their guests will be allowed to attend."

Kelly, who said he was elected the statewide leader of the Knights of the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan in February, expects at least 30 people to attend the meeting at his Myers Road property.

About 20 people, not including the media, attended a similar meeting at the site on Jan. 19, the federal holiday honoring King.

"We will be passing out literature on the dirt road in front of the farm," Kelly added. "Any guests who want to will be allowed to join."

To date the Klan has not applied for a temporary use permit required under a 1981 zoning ordinance, according to Frederick County Zoning Administrator Michael C. Thompson.

The ordinance requires a person to obtain a temporary use permit from the county before holding a public rally or gathering on non-institutional private property. Public rallies and gatherings are defined in the ordinance as those open to at least a segment of the general public.

A Frederick County Circuit Court injunction barred all but Klan members from attending the January meeting. The county sought the injunction because the Klan had failed to apply for a temporary use permit.

Under the injunction issued for that event, the Klan would have been in violation of the ordinance if its meeting was open to any segment of the public who were not members.

But the county can not issue such a permit if the Klan applied for one because of a U.S. District Court ruling in October 1986.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sued the county for issuing a permit for a Klan rally at the Kelly farm in August, 1985 because it was not open to all members of the public.

According to the judge's decision, the county erred in issuing the permit and ruled that the zoning administrator could not issue one if there was reason to believe discrimination would occur.